



Minnesota Department of Corrections COVID-19 Vaccination Informational FAQ's

The COVID-19 vaccine is beginning to be distributed. We know there are a lot of questions about what to expect. Below is vaccination information for department employees.

At this time, there is a limited supply of vaccine and it will be distributed following the CDC guidance and Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) prioritization. The first goal is to get limited doses to the most vulnerable or exposed persons, what the CDC calls [Phase 1a](#). This is healthcare workers, emergency medical service workers, and people living and working in long-term care settings.

Minnesota Management and Budget, working with the MDH, is leading the coordination of and communication about distributing the vaccine to state employees. Department employees will be eligible for the vaccine based on where they fall within the phases established in the CDC guidance.

The information in this FAQ pertains to the Moderna COVID-19 Vaccine unless otherwise specified. If you have questions not answered here, please e-mail IMT.doc@state.mn.us

Information about the COVID-19 vaccine is changing rapidly. Please [refer to sources](#) at the end of this document for the most up-to-date information.

VACCINE PLANNING:

When is the Minnesota Department of Corrections (DOC) receiving the vaccine?

As stated, some doses of vaccine have already arrived. This vaccine is for staff and incarcerated individuals identified in priority level 1 of Phase 1a. We are expecting additional vaccine to arrive in February and will begin vaccinating staff based on priority levels determined by MDH.

How much vaccine will the DOC get?

The vaccine is allocated by the MDH and at this time the department does not know how many doses will be provided by MDH. In discussion with MDH, we believe we will likely receive the vaccine in close succession and everyone who received their 1st dose should be able to receive their 2nd dose at the appropriate time.

Where will the vaccine be stored?

The department has appropriate refrigerators to store thawed vaccine. The department has purchased ultra-cold freezers to store frozen vaccine.

What is our vaccination target for the DOC?

We hope to vaccinate all department staff who are eligible when we are provided the vaccine pursuant to MDH prioritization and dose allocations.

Who can get vaccinated?

During [Phase 1a as defined by MDH](#) vaccine doses will be allocated to healthcare personnel and long-term care facility residents. Healthcare personnel are defined as any paid or unpaid people serving in healthcare settings who have the potential for direct or indirect exposure to patients or infectious materials. This includes, but is not limited to nurses and nursing assistants, doctors and advanced practice providers.

MDH developed the COVID-19 Vaccine Allocation and Prioritization Plan for Minnesota and contractually we need to follow their recommendations. Additional information around tiering and prioritization at the Minnesota Department of Corrections will be shared as soon as we are notified of the prioritization by MDH.

When should I get vaccinated?

The timing of your vaccine will be based on where you fall in the tiering process based on your job. Whenever you are notified that it is your turn to be vaccinated, consider trying to time your vaccine administration before you have time off in case you experience any side effects.

Will the DOC be staggering the vaccination of staff rather than vaccinating everyone on the same day to ensure if people need to be out post-vaccination with symptoms, they still have a workforce?

Yes, we will be staggering delivery of vaccine to staff so that not all staff on a shift are vaccinated at the same time. This maybe more important after the 2nd dose when systemic symptoms after vaccination, such as fever, are more common. We will also look at vaccination delivery on days prior to having time off from work.

VACCINE TRIALS:**What age groups was the vaccine approved for?**

The Moderna vaccine was approved in people ages 18 and up, including people over the age of 65. Further studies are in process for vaccines for children.

Were people from diverse communities included in these trials?

Yes, people from racially and ethnically diverse backgrounds were included in both arms of this trial. Overall, among the total participants who received either the Moderna COVID-19 Vaccine or placebo, 52.6% were male and 47.4% were female, 79.41% were White, 9.7% were Black or African American, 20.0% were Hispanic/Latino, 4.7% were Asian, and <3% were other races.

Is the vaccine approved and safe for pregnant or breast-feeding women?

There is currently not enough data to know if this is safe for pregnant or breast-feeding women. The initial studies were done in non-pregnant women (although some did become pregnant during the trial). It is highly recommended that staff who are pregnant or breast feeding should consult with their health care provider assist in deciding whether to get vaccinated.

Is the vaccine approved and safe for those who are immunocompromised?

The study excluded immunocompromised individuals. It may be safe in some immunocompromised people as it is not a live vaccine, but it is unclear if the vaccine will have the maximal effect in people with underlying immunosuppressing conditions or medications. It is highly recommended that staff who are immunocompromised should consult with their healthcare provider assist in deciding whether to get vaccinated.

GETTING THE VACCINE:**Is the COVID-19 vaccine mandatory for DOC employees and can I decline?**

Getting vaccinated is not mandatory for department employees. The CDC recommends the vaccine for people ages 16 and older. At this time, there will be no enterprise-wide policy requiring all employees to get the vaccine. While, some agencies or divisions may create their own policy requiring employees to get the vaccine based on the nature of the work or funding requirements the department has not done so at this time.

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Will there be a cost to be vaccinated?

No. The vaccine is provided at no cost. Please be aware that you will be required to provide your health insurance card at the time of vaccination.

Which vaccine will DOC employees receive?

It is expected that staff will receive the Moderna vaccine however it is possible that other vaccines will be allocated to the department. Employees should receive the same vaccine for their 2nd dose approximately 4 weeks after their initial dose.

Staff will receive a vaccination card when getting their first dose that they should bring when getting their 2nd dose. We also recommend taking a photo with your phone of the slip in case you were to lose the paper.

Should people who have a current clinical or lab diagnosis of COVID-19 get the vaccine?

No, it is not recommended that you get the vaccine now if you are in the acute state of the COVID-19 illness.

Should I get the vaccine if I had COVID-19 in the past?

Yes. There is no time interval that an employee must wait once they have completed isolation and cleared their infection.

Should I get the vaccine if I received either convalescent plasma or a monoclonal antibody infusion such as Bamlanivimab or Casirivimab/Imdevimab?

There is currently no data on safety or efficacy of the COVID-19 vaccination in persons who received monoclonal antibodies or convalescent plasma as part of COVID-19 treatment. Vaccination should be deferred for at least 90 days to avoid interference of the treatment with vaccine-induced immune responses. Based on the half-life of therapies and evidence suggesting reinfection is uncommon within 90 days of initial infection.

What should I tell the provider before I get the vaccine?

- If you have ever had a serious allergic reaction.
- If you are having any fevers or symptoms of COVID-19.
- If you have a bleeding disorder or are on blood thinners.
- If you have an immunocompromising condition or are on immunocompromising medications.
- If you are pregnant or plan to become pregnant.
- If you are breastfeeding.
- If you have already gotten another COVID-19 vaccine.

Are there any contraindications to getting the vaccine?

- You should not receive this vaccine if you have had a severe allergic reaction to the first dose or any ingredient of this vaccine.
- The Moderna COVID-19 Vaccine contains the following ingredients: messenger ribonucleic acid (mRNA), lipids (SM-102, polyethylene glycol [PEG] 2000 dimyristoyl glycerol [DMG], cholesterol, and 1,2-distearoyl-sn-glycero-3-phosphocholine [DSPC]), tromethamine, tromethamine hydrochloride, acetic acid, sodium acetate, and sucrose.
- Because of reports of anaphylactic reactions in people vaccinated outside of the clinical trials, people who have had severe allergic reaction to any vaccine or injectable therapy (intramuscular, intravenous, or subcutaneous) should not receive the Moderna vaccine at this time.

Can I get the COVID 19 vaccine if I have recently had other vaccines?

You should not have any other vaccine(s) two weeks prior or two weeks after receiving the COVID-19 vaccine.

Where and when can I get vaccinated?

The department has already started vaccinations with health services personnel who work in dedicated long-term care units along with the population that resides in these units (MCF-OPH TCU/Dialysis, MCF-FRB Linden Unit and MCF-SHK Monahan Unit). We intend to offer vaccinations to all staff pursuant to MDH prioritizations

and when vaccine is allocated to the department. This includes all staff in facilities, field services, Central Office and MINNCOR.

Neither MMB nor the department will be collecting age or health information about you for the purposes of developing a list for vaccination priority. If you believe you are eligible for Phase 1b or Phase 1c based on your age or health condition, we encourage you to work directly with your healthcare provider to determine whether you can get the vaccine outside the work setting.

Timing is guided by MDH priority level determinations and how much vaccine Minnesota has in its supply. We do not know when vaccine doses will be allocated to the department. It is likely that we will have short notice of deliveries, so publishing a schedule in advance is not possible.

We expect to offer the vaccine at agency locations or at state-sponsored clinics. You may have to drive up to 60 miles to get the vaccine through an agency or state-sponsored clinic.

How are you confirming that staff are eligible as part of the first phase group before they receive the vaccine?

The DOC is working with MDH to determine, based on job classification, when the vaccine will be available.

Will incarcerated individuals be vaccinated?

Yes, incarcerated individuals will be vaccinated using the same priorities set by the MDH. The DOC does not determine who is eligible to receive the vaccine. The DOC is following the prioritization levels developed by MDH. Some incarcerated individuals who live in units identified by MDH as long-term care units have already received their first dose of vaccination. This falls in line with the ethical principles guiding prioritization.

Are we offering vaccine to those under correctional supervision in the community?

The DOC does not have a current plan to vaccinate this population. Individuals under community supervision are encouraged to contact their health care provider or public health officials to seek information regarding vaccination.

Will programming for the incarcerated population return to normal once most of the population has been vaccinated?

Decisions on facility programming and schedules will be made based on infection levels. These levels may be influenced by how many incarcerated people accept the vaccination.

When will visiting fully open at facilities?

Visiting decisions are made based on infection levels at individual facilities. However, broad vaccination of those in the community and in facilities will help lower infection levels. Visitors will not be required to provide proof of vaccination in order to visit.

Who is administering the vaccine?

Health Services staff will administer the vaccine to incarcerated individuals and staff. There may be times when the contract vendor Homeland Health may assist with vaccinations for staff. All vaccinations will be delivered according to MDH prioritization levels.

Why should I get vaccinated now if it is made available to me?

While we understand that some people may be concerned by how quickly the vaccines were developed, they were carefully evaluated in clinical trials to ensure their safety and determine that the benefits outweigh the risks.

Will my manager/supervisor know that I received the vaccine?

Human Resources for staff and Health Services for incarcerated individuals will be tracking vaccinations using our Smartsheet system. At this point, our plan is that this data will NOT be accessible by managers or supervisors because the vaccine is not mandatory.

Can I get Paid time for vaccinations?

Getting vaccinated is currently not mandatory or considered a condition of employment. Therefore, staff will not be paid to report to a vaccination operation.

Is there an incentive for getting vaccinated?

No, there is no material incentive for getting vaccinated. However, getting vaccinated will help strengthen the DOC and the community against the virus.

What can I do to educate myself further about the COVID-19 vaccine?

Consider reading Moderna [Fact Sheet for Recipients and Caregivers](#) ahead of time.

SAFETY & EFFICACY:**Are these vaccines safe?**

Yes, they are overall safe with risk for only mild side effects (see below). Even though this vaccine was studied and produced quickly, it has gone through the appropriate vaccine safety monitoring process processes overseeing the Phase 3 trials of these vaccines. The Pfizer vaccine has also been approved by the FDA under EUA and the Moderna vaccine was approved by EUA on December 18, 2020 as well. The Pfizer trial had almost 45,000 individuals in it and Moderna with over 30,000 individuals trialing the vaccine.

What is the efficacy of the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna mRNA vaccine?

Both of these vaccines are extremely effective in preventing disease from COVID-19.

- Pfizer: 7 days after the 2nd dose, this vaccine is 95% effective.
- Moderna: 14 days after the 2nd dose, this vaccine is 94% effective.

This data was based on research in over 70,000 patients and the results exceeded expectations for a COVID-19 vaccine.

How do these vaccines work? Does the Moderna vaccine permanently change your DNA?

They contain a small amount of mRNA (messenger RNA) that temporarily stimulates human cells to make the SARS-CoV-2 spike protein. This spike protein causes our immune system to make antibodies against the virus. The mRNA works with our bodies' natural defenses to safely develop immunity. The mRNA does not enter the nucleus of our cells and does not become a part of or permanently alter our DNA. The vaccines are NOT a live or weakened virus; they are inactivated or non-infectious and you CANNOT get COVID-19 from the vaccine or give it to others. These vaccines also DO NOT cause you to test positive on COVID-19 viral tests.

SIDE EFFECTS:**What side effects does the vaccine have?**

Side effects of the vaccine include pain at the injection site, fatigue, headache, muscle aches, chills, joint pain, fever. They are usually mild to moderate in severity and occur within the first three days of receiving the first dose of the vaccine (the day of the vaccination and the following 2 days, most occurring the day after vaccination). They should only last 1-2 days. These side effects signal that your immune system is reacting in a healthy way. Usually symptoms are more severe upon the second dose. Side effects were generally less frequent in participants 55 years and older compared to younger participants in the vaccine trials.

If I have an adverse event or a side effect to the vaccine, will that be reported?

Yes, any adverse events that occur after receiving the vaccine can be reported to the VSafe system which can be downloaded to your personal phone:

- Enroll in the VSafe system to report it directly to the Center for Disease Control (CDC).

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How can I learn more about the VSafe system?

The [VSafe system](#) is a new CDC smart phone based monitoring system using text messages and web surveys.

What does the VSafe program do?

- Participants can report side effects and CDC can follow up by phone
- Electronic check-ins with vaccine recipients
 - Daily for week 1 post vaccination, weekly x 6 weeks, then at 3, 6, 12 months post vaccination
 - Timeline resets at 2nd dose
- CDC is asking providers to help get as many people into V-Safe as possible
 - Vaccine recipients will receive an info sheet (there is also an electronic version if preferred)
 - Employees and patients can opt out by texting 'STOP' or restart again by texting 'START'
- If a clinically important health impact is recorded (e.g. missing work, unable to do normal daily activities, received medical care) – a CDC representative conducts active telephone follow up and takes a report if appropriate

IMMUNITY & POST-VACCINATION:

How long does immunity last?

The length of immunity or protection from the vaccine is unknown at this point.

Can my COVID-19 PCR test turn positive as a result of vaccination?

No, the vaccine will not lead to a positive COVID-19 test.

Do I still need to wear a mask if I get the vaccine?

Yes. While experts learn more about the protection that COVID-19 vaccines provide under real-life conditions, it will be important for everyone to continue using **all the tools** available to us to help stop this pandemic, like covering your mouth and nose with a mask, washing hands often, and staying at least 6 feet away from others. Together, COVID-19 vaccination and following CDC's recommendations for [how to protect yourself and others](#) will offer the best protection from getting and spreading COVID-19. Experts need to understand more about the protection that COVID-19 vaccines provide before deciding to change recommendations on steps everyone should take to slow the spread of the virus that causes COVID-19. Other factors, including how many people get vaccinated and how the virus is spreading in communities, will also affect this decision.

What if I get sick from the vaccine and have to be out of work? Is that time off covered by COVID Leave Pay?

Much like other vaccines, many may feel unwell for a day or two after receiving the COVID-19 vaccination. This is normal and means the vaccine is creating an appropriate immune response. In the event of side effects following the COVID-19 vaccination, should an employee feel that they are ill and unable to come to work, employees can use their accrued sick leave for the sick leave qualifying reason. Employees should follow the normal call in process if they are unable to come to work.

If you develop symptoms concerning for COVID-19 infection or your post-vaccination symptoms last longer than 48 hours, please notify your health care provider and they will likely recommend COVID-19 testing. If you had a high-risk exposure in the last 14 days and have post-vaccination symptoms, you should get tested for COVID-19.

How do I manage post-vaccination symptoms?

Consider using acetaminophen for fevers and non-steroidal anti-inflammatories for pain. Please contact your health care provider if you are pregnant or nursing and experiencing post-vaccination symptoms.

If vaccinated, does that change my exposure risk and mean I don't have to be quarantined after an exposure?

The Minnesota Department of Corrections will continue to require quarantine and isolation.

Learn More:

- MDH prioritization document (watch site for updates over time)_
<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/vaccine/phase1aguide.pdf>
- [Frequently Asked Questions about COVID-19 Vaccination](#) (CDC)
- [COVID-19 Vaccine Information for Health Professionals](#) (MDH)
- FDA EUA for the ModernaTX COVID-19 Vaccine:
<https://www.fda.gov/emergency-preparedness-and-response/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19/moderna-covid-19-vaccine>
(Site includes the letter of authorization, Fact sheets for healthcare providers and recipients and caregivers, press release, and the 12/17/2020 Advisory Committee Meeting Information)
- Minnesota Department of Health: COVID-19 information page_
<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/vaccine.html>
- ACIP. COVID-19 Committee meetings presentations._
<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/acip/meetings/slides-2020-12-11.html>
- ACIP. Use of ModernaTX COVID-19 Vaccine: Clinical Considerations.
<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/acip/recs/grade/covid-19-moderna-etr.html>
- Moderna. Global Information About ModernaTX COVID-19 Vaccine_
<https://www.modernatx.com/covid19vaccine-eua/recipients/>
- MMRW, December 20, 2020;69. The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices' Interim Recommendation for Use of Moderna COVID-19 Vaccine — United States, December 2020.
<https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm695152e1.htm>
- American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists Practice Advisory statement on Vaccinating Pregnant and Lactating Patients Against COVID-19:
<https://www.acog.org/en/clinical/clinical-guidance/practice-advisory/articles/2020/12/vaccinating-Pregnant-and-Lactating-Patients-Against-COVID-19>
- Post Vaccine Considerations for Healthcare Personnel (CDC)_
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/post-vaccine-considerations-healthcare-personnel.html>